

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH SERGEANT FIRST CLASS ED MALONE,
U.S. ARMY VIA TELECONFERENCE TIME: 2:30 P.M. EST DATE: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2009

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LINDY KYZER (U.S. Army Public Affairs): Okay, my clock turned to 2:30.
So we'll go ahead and get started. We're down a couple of participants that we
did expect. But we'll go ahead and get started without them. And hopefully
they'll go ahead and join us once we've already begun.

Again this is Lindy Kyzer with Army Public Affairs. We're pleased to
have with us today Sergeant First Class Ed Malone. He's an African-American
Army Reserve NCO from the U.S. Army Cadet Command.

He deployed twice in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, returning most
recently in January of 2006. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with valor
for his service there. Currently he's the senior military instructor at Bowie
State University and resides in Bowie, Maryland. So with that, I'll go ahead
and turn it over to Sergeant First Class Malone, to give a few minutes of
opening remarks, maybe discuss his current assignment and position and what he's
doing and also possibly discuss a little bit more the mission that led him to
receive that Bronze Star Medal.

So Sergeant Malone, I'll turn it over to you.

SGT. MALONE: Sure. Sergeant First Class Malone here. One correction
I want to make: I'm active Army, not the Reserves. (Laughs.) So I just wanted
to clarify that. But I am teaching here at Bowie State University Army ROTC,
full-time active duty. I've been at this assignment now for the last three
years.

I come from the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, which was down at Fort
Carson before they reflagged down at Fort Hood. I've got about 14 years of
military experience. As a 19-Delta cavalry scout, my prior MOS was a 13-Bravo
field artillery.

I deployed three times: once to Kosovo in '99 -- after the initial air
campaign, we were one of the first American troops on the ground -- and then
again in OIF-1 in 2003, during the initial invasion of Baghdad, and also 2005.
I did two yearlong tours there. Currently my plans are to continue my service
within the Army and retire at 20 years or maybe go beyond that, depending. And
I'm just glad to be here.

MS. KYZER: Great. And again I had hoped we'd have some other folks on
the line. But we do have Chuck Simmins with America's North Shore Journal.

So Chuck, I turn it over to you. Do you have any questions?

Q I sure do.

Sergeant Malone, first of all, thank you very much for your service to our country.

SGT. MALONE: Sure.

Q We appreciate that.

SGT. MALONE: Thank you.

Q Can you give us a little bit about your background: education, what kind of schools you may have gone to with the military, things like that?

SGT. MALONE: Sure. I graduated in the class of '92 in California. Immediately following high school, I didn't go to college or even join the military right away. I just kind of worked full-time. While I was in the service, I've taken some college courses. Right now I'm currently working on completing my Associate's Degree. I've got about 60 semester-credit hours right now.

As far as military schooling, I've been to air assault school, airborne school, combat lifesaver course, scout leaders course, international long-range reconnaissance patrol school, let's see, all the NCO academies I can do up to this point.

That's a primary leadership development course, basic non-commissioned officers course and advanced non-commissioned officers course.

But I've had tons of different types of schooling that's probably not relevant to talk about here, but I've had special training in other areas as well.

Q All right. And you're at Bowie State.

SGT. MALONE: Yes, sir.

Q Now, this says you're the senior military instructor. Does that mean that there are no officers at that --

SGT. MALONE: Well, the title "senior military instructor" is basically the title given to the ranking noncommissioned officer.

Q Yeah, okay.

SGT. MALONE: The actual -- I work for a lieutenant colonel who is the professor of military science. He's actually my battalion commander in charge.

Q Okay.

SGT. MALONE: And under him you have our executive officer, who's a major. He's the assistant professor of military science. Then on the NCO side, you have me, the senior military instructor. And then basically -- I'm basically in charge of, you know, training our cadets, our -- third-year level

cadets in infantry tactics, land navigation and things like that -- just basic Army skills.

Q Okay. And how many cadets are in that university's --

SGT. MALONE: Currently we have 52 cadets in our program.

Q How many?

SGT. MALONE: We have 52 cadets in our program.

Q Fifty-two, okay.

SGT. MALONE: Yes.

Q How many -- is that a good number for that program?

SGT. MALONE: It is. It is. We're actually a very small program. We're a very small program. The university population is about 5,000-some students. And that number's actually grown significantly over the last two years, since I've been here. So we're sitting pretty good.

And our recruiting numbers are going up, actually. So, you know, we're growing by the semester.

Q Great. What's the mix between men and women in your program?

SGT. MALONE: There's definitely a higher ratio of women. I couldn't give you a number right now off the top of my head, but --

Q Can you give me a -- you're not 50-50.

SGT. MALONE: No, we're not 50-50. I would say more probably, you know, 60-40, something.

Q Oh, well, that's still a --

SGT. MALONE: There's -- we have a lot of women in our program. And I'm just throwing a number out there, and it's probably a little bit more drastic than that. But we are, you know -- in my class alone, women make up the majority of my students. I have 11 students, and out of those -- one, two, three -- about four of them are males.

Q Okay.

SGT. MALONE: Or, actually, five.

Q What -- does Bowie State have an area of emphasis or a specialty that -- you know, that your kids are in, where, you know, like some schools are engineering schools --

SGT. MALONE: Right.

Q -- some schools are accounting schools?

SGT. MALONE: Bowie State's got a great business management program, as well as communications and computer science and business administration, basically, they offer here.

Q So that's -- to be fair, that's kind of where a good number of your students are.

SGT. MALONE: A lot of them are communication majors, yes.

Q Communications.

SGT. MALONE: Yeah.

Q Okay. Explain to me how the ROTC teaching effort -- what -- you're no longer in a combat command. SGT. MALONE: Right.

Q Who do you fall under?

SGT. MALONE: We fall under United States Army Cadet Command, which falls under United States Army Training Command -- Training and Doctrine Command.

Q Okay.

SGT. MALONE: And so everything on the Training and Doctrine Command side of the house, you know, as far as recruiting, retention, Cadet Command, basic training, advanced individual training, all those, you know -- you know, getting folks into military and training them is basically the command we fall under. And again, that falls under the wide umbrella of TRADOC or United States Army Training and Doctrine Command.

Q All right.

SGT. MALONE: So we -- basically, you know, we work directly for United States Army Cadet Command, and that's all part of Accessions, all part of Accessions Command. I know it sounds -- I'm throwing a lot of words out there at you, but (they got ?) words.

Q Well, now, would Cadet Command also include West Point, Norwich, A&M? Or are those --

SGT. MALONE: Yeah, as far as the military academies, that's -- they fall all under Accessions Command, which -- yeah, correct.

Q Okay. But you're basically similar to -- you're similar to Norwich, the Citadel?

SGT. MALONE: Well, the ROTC program at these schools -- or my school in particular -- you know, it's a regular university.

Q Yeah.

SGT. MALONE: It is not, you know, a military academy or things like that. So the students here aren't required to do ROTC things, you know, seven days a week.

Q Right.

SGT. MALONE: They're basically ROTC students two days out of the week, Tuesday and Thursdays. Their classes are from, you know, an hour and 20 minutes. And then they have a lab on Thursday which is another hour and 20 minutes. So they really don't spend a whole lot of time doing military activities now. We have a lot of weekend training that we have, you know, planned. There's also types -- you know, different types of activities that come along, as far as providing a color guard for sporting events or any other type of event that they like us to support.

But, yeah, these students aren't, you know, cadets the whole time they're here.

Q All right.

SGT. MALONE: They're cadets, but they're --

Q Right.

SGT. MALONE: You know, they're going to school full time. And that's their primary mission, is to get their college degree.

Q Okay.

SGT. MALONE: And we put that emphasis first and foremost before ROTC.

Q All right. Are there any other services represented on campus?

SGT. MALONE: Not here, no.

Q Okay.

SGT. MALONE: You only have Army ROTC here.

Q Okay. Lindy, am I the only one asking the questions right now?

MS. KYZER: I believe so. Is anyone else on the line?

I -- I think it's just you, Chuck.

Q Okay. I just --

MS. KYZER: I have a couple of things that I got via e-mail, but --

Q Why don't you ask them, and let me gather some more thoughts.

MS. KYZER: Okay. We had -- Rob Stewart from NCOCall.com wasn't able to make it, but he wanted to know what you see as your role as a mentor for young officers, especially young black officers, considering Bowie State is a historically black university with an all-black ROTC cadre, from what he understands. Could you respond to that?

SGT. MALONE: Sure. Well, I see my role as more or less a mentor, a coach, a counselor, somebody that needs to lead by example. A lot of these students that come here have absolutely zero experience or zero exposure to the military. They have no clue what the Army's all about. And my job, in essence,

is to sort of give them a visual reference to what an NCO does as -- you know, and the roles of the officers. They act as sort of their mentors as well, because, you know, these are what these kids are aspiring to be, army officers.

And I'm -- you know, and it's great that, you know, I'm, you know, half-African-American, because I can relate to them on so many different levels. So it helps, definitely helps. But you know, we try to diversify our program. You know, we don't just try to go out there and recruit -- actively recruit young African-Americans. We're seeking, you know, to diversify our program by having -- you know, going out and talking to the Hispanic kids on campus, the Asian kids, the Caucasian kids on campus.

We want to, you know, really bring that onboard because we want our program to be a reflection of what is, you know -- the Army, you know. And because we all know Army is very much diversified. MS. KYZER: Okay, great. And then speaking to that, as a historically black university, for Bowie State University, do you have, you know, some diversity within your ROTC group, though, as well?

SGT. MALONE: We do.

MS. KYZER: And how -- you just kind of referred to it, but how are you working to, you know, grow and expand the participation in the program?

SGT. MALONE: Oh, we do have a diverse group. And what we do is we go out and talk to the students from all the high schools in the local area. We go to different -- we have -- hold different recruiting events everywhere. I mean, we just don't focus on HBCU side. We go to all the high schools. We talk to all the students.

If we, you know, meet people on the street and they see that we're in the Army, they say, "Hey, I'm interested in joining the Army," I give them my card, you know. A lot of times, these -- you know, it's coming from non-African-Americans. So I mean, we reach out, you know, in various different ways. But normally, we go out and do recruiting events at different locations. And that's how we go out and reach out to the public.

MS. KYZER: Okay. Well, those are the questions I had.

Chuck, do you have any more questions?

Q I -- I do. Sergeant, could you talk a little bit about the incident that resulted in your receiving the Bronze Star?

SGT. MALONE: Sure. It was June 25th. We were out conducting a -- what's called a "Knock and Greet" mission.

Q June 25th of which year?

SGT. MALONE: Oh, I'm sorry; 2005.

And basically what that means is we would go out in probably half a platoon size and conduct patrols and -- in the city, in urban areas -- and basically talk to the folks and see, you know, if we could gather intelligence, find out if there's any enemy activity in the area. And we were out on one of those missions that day.

We got linked up with the -- a small contingent of Iraqi security forcers, as well as their national guard advisers. And we departed from our base of operations and proceeded to conduct the patrol. Basically, what we were going to do is go door-to-door, just talk to folks, you know, find out if we can gather, you know, any type of intelligence, and that's generally how these things work.

But as soon as we got into the area where we were going to be operating that day, we noticed that, you know, it was pretty crowded in the street and there was a lot of people out there. And within five or 10 minutes, the street started clearing out pretty quick. And usually that's a sign or a clue that something's about to happen. And sure enough, within maybe 15, 20 minutes of the patrol, you know, a barrage of enemy fire opened up on us.

Now, initially, one of my sergeants in my platoon was hit. He got hit in the leg. And at the time, we had no idea how severe it was. But he had taken a bullet in his leg, which we found out later, you know, traveled up his spine and basically immobilized him. I was the first person to him after he was screaming that "I was hit," got over there and I proceeded to drag him out of the line of fire. And Sergeant Wilsdow (ph) was a big guy. This guy weighed over 200 pounds as he is, and with all that equipment on, you know, he was even heavier. So I needed some help.

At that time, our platoon medic, who was assigned to my platoon, to that mission, and another one of my soldiers came and helped me drag him out of the line of fire, and both of them proceeded to administer first aid on him once we got him behind cover. Those two soldiers that helped me -- I'm kind of getting off track here -- but the two soldiers that helped me drag him out of the line of fire was killed in a subsequent firefight about two weeks later. But you know, they both played a significant role in this firefight later on, as you'll hear. So what we did was we deployed -- we sought cover, deployed, tried to ascertain where the fire was coming from.

Q You were on foot?

SGT. MALONE: We were on foot. We were on foot. We had two vehicles in direct support, two Bradley Fighting Vehicles, because we were a Bradley scout platoon. But the bulk of us were on foot. We had two Bradleys in direct support, but those guys were basically watching the intersection for us at a different location.

So I got with one of the national guard advisers, and he had told me he identified where the fire was coming from. So we proceeded to go ahead and muster up a quick clearing team.

Me and about five other soldiers, we threw a grenade into the courtyard. We entered and found the insurgent that was shooting at us. We wounded him with the grenade blast. We proceeded to clear his house, and I saw that he was wounded. So I directed my men to start, you know, searching his home while I proceeded to administer first aid.

And then I sent a couple guys up to the roof because one of our TTPs, our tactics, techniques and procedures, in an urban environment is to get people on the roof to secure the high ground, because we don't want to be caught in a disadvantage of being, you know, sitting much in a kill zone. So we wanted to get the eyes on as high as possible.

We sent those couple guys up to the roof, heard sporadic gunfire, but we proceeded to go ahead and search his home, where we found, you know, a cache of different types of munitions and explosives and things like that.

So once he was secure, I went to the rooftop, where my soldiers reported that they saw guys running around with AK-47s, and they were receiving some fire. So we identified where they were, deployed several grenades, took out a bunch of them with that -- at that time.

You know, we also had a sniper. Sorry. We also had a sniper up at the -- what we called the castle, which is where we -- which is basically the highest point in the city that has the best observation throughout the whole city. And it's the old Ottoman Empire era castle that just -- that remained intact pretty much. And we had snipers up there in overwatch, and they were able to identify targets and take targets out for us as well. And we were directing traffic with those guys and also with the OH-58 Kiowa Scout helicopter support, who came in and reported a large number of armed insurgents -- 60 to a hundred, I guess, was the number -- moving towards our location. And they were able to sort of keep those guys at bay by providing a covering fire for us, you know, unleashing rockets and firing their main gun to keep these guys at bay.

But they're -- you know, there were a lot of fire coming in from different locations, and we just couldn't really spot and ID where the enemy was shooting from, because they were in pretty well covered and concealed positions themselves. But we managed to take out about 15 to 20 enemy insurgents ourselves. I'm not sure how many the Kiowa pilots were able to take out. A sniper took out two. From there -- the firefight lasted for about maybe four hours at this point, and again, we were basically -- you know, the guys that were in the building, in the house, were still, you know, gathering up all the stuff there they found.

We secured the enemy insurgent to a stretcher, and the plan was to pull one of our Bradleys up and provide covering fire while we exfiltrated out of that house, and which they did. They provided good covering fire. And as we started to load this casualty on the back of a Bradley, another machine gun opened up on us from somewhere, and we ended up dropping him and seeking cover.

At that time, I was trying to -- you know, I was kind of out there by myself, behind a Bradley. My guys were, you know, located, you know, near the building that we were in, and it had some pretty good covering sewn in. But I was trying to identify where the shooter was.

So I stayed out there trying to pinpoint the target to try to direct fires onto it to suppress.

My foot -- (chuckles) -- happened to be not covered, though, and that's when I got hit in my foot. And I was taken out of the fight that way.

So I -- you know, just sitting there with a hole in my boot, you know. Told my guys I'm hit. The same two soldiers -- or the same soldier -- one of the same soldiers that helped me drag the sergeant that got shot at the start of the firefight, he came and got me, and -- (inaudible) -- and we were able to successfully (exit the situation ?) there. And that's pretty much how it went down.

Q Okay. And what you -- you said June 23rd?

SGT. MALONE: I'm sorry, June 25th.

Q June 25th of 2005?

SGT. MALONE: Yes.

Q What -- whereabouts in Iraq?

SGT. MALONE: This was in the city of Tallafar, which is -- there's two spellings for it. It's T-a-l-l-a-f-a-r, which is the most popular spelling, I guess. And it -- and it --

Q And you were with the 3rd Armored Cavalry at that point?

SGT. MALONE: Correct. I was the platoon sergeant of 3rd Platoon, 2nd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry. 3rd Platoon -- (inaudible).

MS. KYZER: Do we have someone else on the line as well? It's --

Q Hi, Lindy. It's Jim Hanson (sp) from Blackfive.

MS. KYZER: Hi, Jim. How are you?

Q I am doing well. That's an amazing (story ?) there, Sergeant.

SGT. MALONE: Thank you, sir. MS. KYZER: If you have a question, we can -- we can turn over to you next.

Q At this point, I think -- that was -- that was pretty interesting and amazing to hear. I guess I would ask, was that a common occurrence to get into that, you know, ambitious a firefight with that many insurgents? Or is that, you know, kind of a singular occasion?

SGT. MALONE: No, we had gotten into some small skirmishes throughout that summer, especially at the beginning of that particular deployment.

But that day -- it was uncommon for them to rally that many enemy troops and to converge on us. We became the focal point of that fight.

The district was -- in Tallafar was called the Sarai district. It's S-a-r-a-i. And that particular district was known to, you know, have a LARGE concentration of enemy insurgents operating in that area, because every time we went in there, we received small-arms fire or RPGs or grenades thrown at us or something. Something would happen every time.

So we knew going in that day that we were probably going to, you know, see some type of action. But we didn't -- we'd never experienced it at that level up until that day. And we'd got into a few heated exchanges, throwing bullets back and forth, but that day was probably the most intense.

Q Were you able to identify which particular insurgent groups it were that banded together to attack you?

SGT. MALONE: Well, we knew there were a lot of foreign fighters operating in the area, a lot of folks that were part of Zarqawi's al Qaeda network that we were fighting against. So a lot of fighters from different

countries. Not so much the local populace, but guys that came over from Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, things like that.

Zarqawi was known to be operating in the area at that time, and we were, you know, on an extensive -- (chuckles) -- hunt to find him. So we knew he was operating in that area pretty extensively.

Q Sergeant?

SGT. MALONE: Yup.

Q Did you get any intel that -- afterward that suggested that this was a planned ambush on their part? Or did they just decide to swarm you after the fight started? SGT. MALONE: Well, we -- it was determined that the reason why they put up such a fight was because they were definitely, you know, protecting something there. Whether that be some high-level enemy insurgent or whether that be, you know, a large weapons cachet (sic) -- whatever it was, they were fighting to defend this particular ground.

And these firefights are what ultimately led to the big offensive in October, 2005, of that year, which was Operation Restoring Rights, which we basically ended up sweeping through and clearing that entire town of enemy insurgents.

Q Did you guys see any large formations of insurgents after that fight, or did this potentially, you know, show them that it was a bad idea to join together and hit our troops face-to-face?

SGT. MALONE: Yeah, they learned a -- I mean, we bloodied their nose pretty well, so they -- you know, when we first got there, we were amazed by some of the things we saw, and that was basically guys going out with small arms -- AK-47s and things like that -- and trying to engage us while we were on our Bradleys. And at the time, we were doing a battle handover with Stryker Unit that had been operating and that's who we were relieving. So they would, you know, shoot at us, you know, our armored vehicles with small arms. So they were very brazen, very bold, and I guess they had a lot of confidence, for some reason, that they could somehow take us out with their small munitions.

But they learned very quickly that they didn't want up to go up against that 25-mm Bushmaster. (Laughter.) Because, you know, that thing rains a lot of destruction and these guys -- they thought twice before they attacked -- they resorted a whole lot of indirect attacks in terms of IEDs and booby traps and things like that. So they're looking at other ways to get us.

MS. KYZER: Okay, are there any other questions?

Q Sergeant, having seen combat and also some peacekeeping in Kosovo and having been in the Army for 14 years, if you were passing one lesson along to the cadets that you teach that you hope they retain their entire military career, what would that lesson be?

SGT. MALONE: I'm sorry, could you repeat that?

Q Yeah. You've seen combat, you've seen peacekeeping operations, plus you've had a lot of time during peace in the Army. What lesson would you like to pass on to the cadets that you teach that they hope that they would retain with them their entire military career?

SGT. MALONE: Definitely to not be hasty -- to be deliberate and to think things through before making a rash decision. And that's helped us out tremendously. We had a great platoon leader that I worked with and, no matter what type of situation we got in, he was always calm, collected and he was very calculating. And patience just pays off -- tactical patience pays off. And I would say in a military career, regardless if they're in combat or not, they just need to exercise a certain level of patience and not jump the gun so much -- just sit and analyze everything -- analyze the whole situation and make a good decision based on the situation.

There's been far too many occasions where folks have gotten hurt or killed with people just, you know, jumping the gun and making a decision that wasn't sound or wasn't well thought-out -- and not just so much combat, but you know, everyday operations -- normal, day-to-day operations. You want to think things through and not be quick to make a hasty decision without analyzing everything in front of you and all the possible solutions and courses of action.

Q Great, thank you. Sounds like good advice to me. (Chuckles.)

MS. KYZER: Okay, with that we'll go ahead and draw to a close right at the half-hour mark anyway. So, again, thank you so much Sergeant 1st Class Malone, for your time. I apologize about getting your bio a little bit incorrect in the beginning.

SGT. MALONE: Oh, no worries. You know, it was just one of those things, you know, as far as being -- well, I guess you think of ROTC in terms of Reserve Officer Training Corps, and I guess folks tend to think that everybody that's in ROTC is a reserve soldier, but you know, we're all active-duty -- the ones that teach are all pretty much active-duty guys.

MS. KYZER: Okay. Well I appreciate the clarification and very much appreciate your time. It definitely was a great story and we appreciated you taking us through how you got that Bronze Star. It was a great story, so with that, we'll go ahead and conclude the roundtable. Thank you for the bloggers who dialed in and thank you again, Sergeant Malone.

SGT. MALONE: Thank you. Appreciate it guys. Bye.

END.